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## MECHANISMS OF DRUG-INDUCED LIVER INJURY: EXPLORING PATHWAYS AND RISK FACTORS FOR LIVER TOXICITY

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### Abstract

Liver injury induced by drugs (DILI) has been the most burning challenge to deal with clinically and regulatory wise, as it stands a foremost cause for the withdrawal of a drug on the grounds of acute liver failure. Intrinsic (dose-dependent) and idiosyncratic (unpredictable) are subdivisions to classify DILI. DILI arises from multiple mechanisms encompassing direct liver cell injury, damage to mitochondria, and immune-mediated reactions. Reactive drug metabolites act as the primary event causing oxidative stress leading to mitochondrial permeability transition and further development of apoptotic or necrotic cell death. Mitochondria thus serve as a focal point for hepatocyte death determining both apoptotic and necrotic pathways, whereby genetic factors playing a role, such as polymorphisms within HLA, alongside environmental factors, such as co-medications and infections, exert an influence on the susceptibility of individuals to DILI. Novel biomarkers like oxidative stress-related molecules, mitochondria injury indicators, and immune response mediators may show promise for early diagnosis and risk stratification. This review focuses on the molecular mechanisms, risk factors, and biomarkers involved in DILI comprehensively. Understanding these mechanisms more broadly may enhance early detection to ensure maximum patient safety and personalized strategies for risk assessment. A suggestion for future research is to consider integrating genomic, metabolomic, and proteomic approaches for the enhanced prediction and prevention of hepatotoxicity.

**Keywords:** *Drug-Induced Liver Injury, Hepatotoxicity, Mitochondrial Dysfunction, Oxidative Stress.*

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## INTRODUCTION

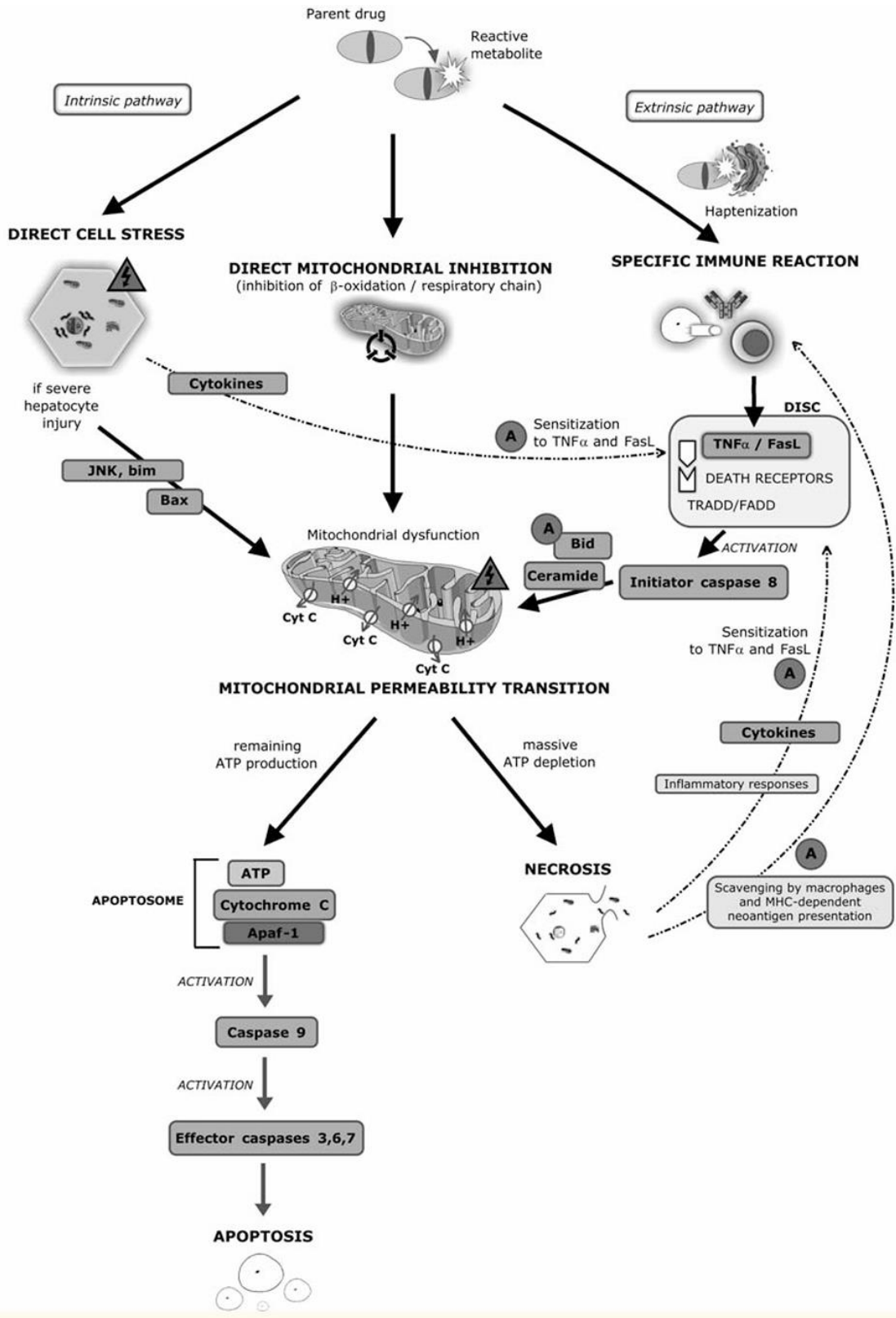
Drug-induced liver injury (DILI) is one of the major sources of liver failure in the world and a principal reason for the withdrawal of drugs from the markets (Castaneda et al., 2015). DILI presents itself in many clinical forms, ranging from asymptomatic enzyme elevations to acute liver failure. Its occurrence is mostly unpredictable, thus posing major challenges in drug development and clinical practice (Meric-Bernstam et al., 2013). Knowing the mechanisms involved in DILI is essential for early detection, effective treatment, and prevention of really bad hepatic outcomes. This introduction focuses on the pathophysiology, risk factors, and molecular mechanisms associated with DILI, as well as advances in biomarkers and strategies for early detection.

### Classification and Epidemiology of DILI

DILI is broadly classified into two main types: intrinsic (dose-related) DILI and idiosyncratic DILI (unpredictable). Intrinsic DILI is a situation where the liver has been inundated with excessive doses of any particular drug on account of its predictable nature like acetaminophen toxicity, in which the liver's detoxification capacity is overwhelmed (Kalusivalingam et al., 2023). Acetaminophen is

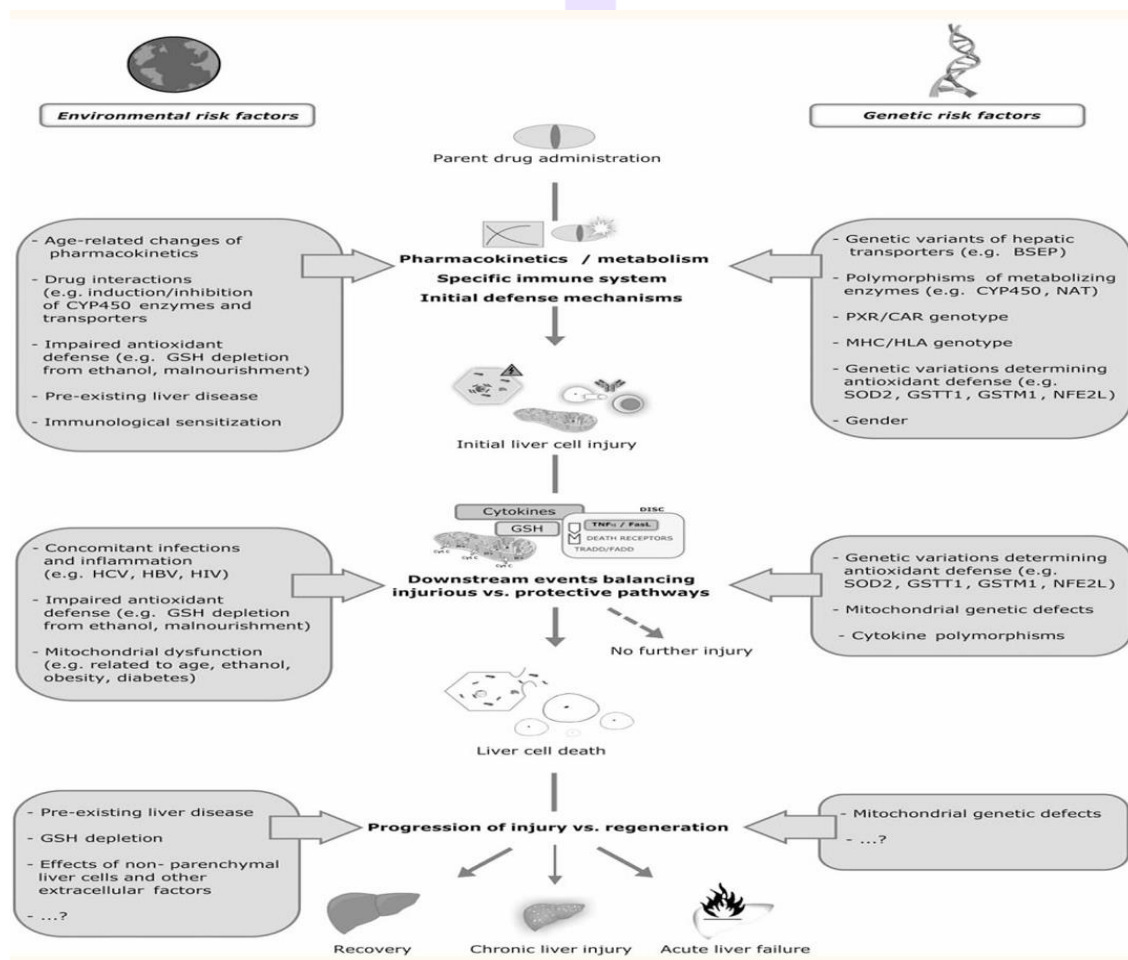
responsible for almost 50% of acute liver failure cases in the US (Castaneda et al., 2015). The idiosyncratic DILI, on the other hand, is unpredictable in a minority of patients, even when therapeutic doses are concerned. There are genetic and environmental factors which determine the susceptibility on an individual basis (Mikolov et al., 2013). DILI is said to occur in about 10 to 15 cases for every 100,000 of the general population, with antibiotics, NSAIDs, and anticonvulsants being the most commonly implicated in causing this (Comito et al., 2022).

Epidemiological studies have established the role of genetic polymorphisms in drug metabolism and immune response in determining susceptibility to DILI (Meric-Bernstam et al., 2013). For example, certain HLA alleles (e.g., HLA-B5701 and HLA-DRB11501) show strong association with increased risk of DILI by specific drugs like flucloxacillin and amoxicillin-clavulanate (Castaneda et al., 2015). Furthermore, those with prior liver disease, metabolic disorder, or patients who abuse alcohol are potentially at risk for drug-induced liver injury (Kalusivalingam et al., 2023).



**Fig. (1).** A 3-step mechanistic working model of hepatotoxicity. At first, damage in initiation occurs through direct cell stress, direct mitochondrial inhibition, and/or specific immune reactions. Second, this damage may subsequently lead to mitochondrial permeability transition (MPT). Intrinsic pathway: direct cellular stress causes activation of the intrinsic pathway, which can be accompanied by the activation of intracellular stressor cascades and pro-apoptotic proteins, for example, Bax. On the other hand, the MPT is initiated through death receptor-mediated extrinsic pathway triggered by effects after immune reactions and/or sensitizing to TNF and FasL binding to death receptors. Cytokines modulate sensitivity of activation. Thirdly, after MPT has occurred, necrosis

or apoptosis will depend on the presence of ATP. In hepatocytes, activation of initiator caspase 8 through extrinsic pathway alone would not trigger apoptosis but the amplification through activities of pro-apoptotic factors i.e. Bid and ceramides would lead to MPT which would proceed to apoptotic pathway activated with sufficient remaining ATP production. Therefore, without ATP, necrosis will result since these energy-consuming apoptotic pathways are not available. There are many amplification mechanisms that have been highlighted (A) may play an important role at different levels for the idiosyncratic occurrence of hepatotoxicity (Current Medicinal Chemistry, 2009, 16, 3041-3053).



**Fig. (2).** Risk factors for hepatotoxicity. Initially, risk factors might be treated as either environmental or genetic alone factors. Mechanistically, risk factors can also be of such differential significance at all levels of events leading to the final result of drug- or chemical-induced liver injury, most often a dichotomous outcome: full recovery vs. acute liver failure. Risk factor events downstream of the initial injury are fairly nonspecific for different hepatotoxins. This figure summarizes the well-known risk factors, but one has to believe that many more exist, with possibly most not known yet (Current Medicinal Chemistry, 2009, 16, 3041-3053).

### Molecular Mechanisms of Hepatotoxicity

The mechanisms include a mixture of reactive metabolites, oxidative stress, mitochondrial dysfunction, and immune response in the case of drug-induced liver injury (Comito et al., 2022).

- **Metabolic Activation of Drugs and Reactive Metabolites:** Drug metabolic activation often implies cytochrome P450 enzyme action, the synthesis of reactive metabolites capable of covalent binding to cellular proteins, thereby inducing either hepatocyte stress or apoptosis (Meric-Bernstam et al., 2013). Acetaminophen causes liver toxicity via its metabolite N-acetyl-p-benzoquinone imine (NAPQI), which depletes glutathione and causes mitochondrial dysfunction (Castaneda et al., 2015).

- **Mitochondrial Dysfunction and Oxidative Stress:** The most vital function of mitochondria in the liver is to safeguard the viability of hepatocytes. Disruption of mitochondrial permeability transition (MPT) would result in depletion of ATP with ensuing hepatocyte death (Kalusivalingam et al., 2023). Increased reactive oxygen species (ROS) production contributes to lipid

peroxidation, DNA injury, and activation of pro-apoptotic pathways (Mikolov et al., 2013).

- **Immune-Mediated Injury:** Idiosyncratic DILI is characterized by drug protein interactions that stimulate adaptive immune responses (Comito et al., 2022). Recognizing the adducts as foreign, the immune system activates T cells and Kupffer cells, leading to **inflammation, cytokine release (TNF- $\alpha$ , IFN- $\gamma$ ), and hepatocyte apoptosis** (Meric-Bernstam et al., 2013).

### Risk Factors for DILI

Several risk factors influence the likelihood of developing DILI:

**Genetic Factors:** HLA polymorphisms and differences in the metabolism of drugs by enzymes such as CYP2E1, UGT1A1, and the capabilities of transporter genes such as ABCB11 and SLC22A1 contribute toward enhanced risks (Comito et al., 2022).

**Factors specific to the patient:** Age, sex, obesity, and pre-existing liver disease all clearly influence the risk of DILI (Kalusivalingam et al., 2023).

**Environmental and Lifestyle Factors:** Alcohol, smoking, and polypharmacy-it is very well known that they contribute extensively toward DILI (Mikolov et al., 2013). For example, alcohol induces CYP2E1 and thus increases production of toxic metabolites (Castaneda et al., 2015).

**Drug-Related Factors:** A drug's lipophilicity, metabolic stability, and immune-stimulating properties determine the drug's possible hepatotoxicity (Meric-Bernstam et al., 2013).

### Biomarkers and Early Detection Strategies

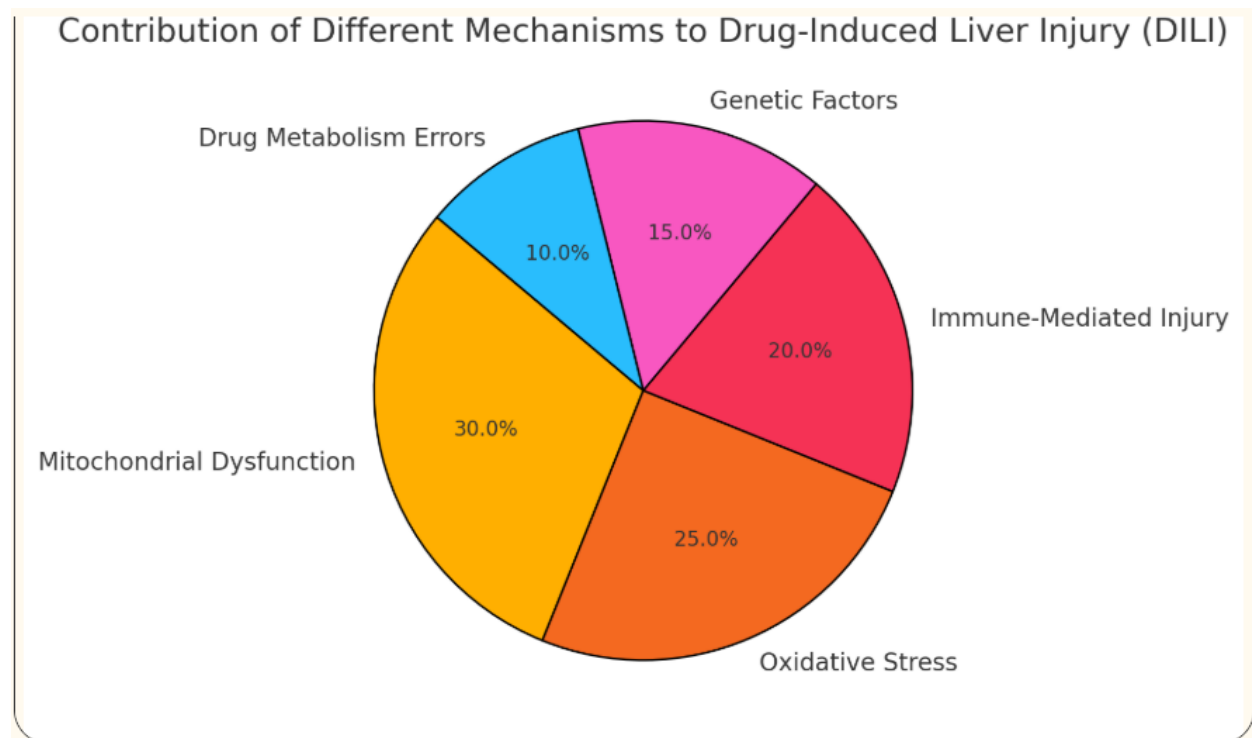
One critical aspect of research remains the identification of biomarkers that will enable early detection and prediction of DILI (Comito et al., 2022). There are some hopeful biomarkers, including:

- Serum ALT and AST Levels: Traditional markers of liver injury, but they cannot be specific (Kalusivalingam et al., 2023).
- Glutamate Dehydrogenase (GLDH): A mitochondrial enzyme that distinguishes between hepatocellular versus cholestatic injury (Mikolov et al., 2013).

- MicroRNA (miRNA) Profiles: Emerging non-invasive biomarkers for hepatocyte injury (Meri-Bernstam et al., 2013).

- High-Mobility Group Box 1 (HMGB1) and K18 Fragments: Indicative of immune-mediated liver damage (Comito et al., 2022).

- Pharmacogenomic screening for the early identification of susceptible individuals combined with AI-driven predictive models will radically improve the management of DILI (Kalusivalingam et al., 2023).



**Fig. (3).** Contribution of different mechanism to DILI

## METHODOLOGY

A systematic review cum data acquisition mechanism is employed in this study for identifying DILI mechanism and its risk factors. The methodology has been divided into the initial five phases: literature review, data collection, analytical framework,

artificial intelligent predictive modeling, and biomarker validation.

### 1. Literature Review

The review draws on an extensive literature search within databases such as PubMed, ScienceDirect, IEEE Xplore, and Google Scholar. It focused on peer-

reviewed articles, systematic reviews, and clinical trials held in the last 20 years.

- **Admissibility Criteria:** DILI-related mechanism studies, mitochondrial dysfunction, oxidative stress, and metabolism of drugs, immune-mediated liver injury.
- **Exclusion Criteria:** Studies with insufficient experimental data, case reports with no mechanistic insight, and those that are 20-plus years except for the case of core studies.
- **Search Terms:** Drug Induced Liver Injury (DILI), Hepatotoxicity, Mitochondrial Dysfunction, Oxidative Stress, Biomarkers of Liver Injury, AI in Hepatotoxicity Prediction.

## 2. Data Collection and Sources

To provide a comprehensive evaluation, open datasets and available clinical reports were used in the analysis. This include:

- **Electronic Health Records (EHRs):** NIH LiverTox database and MIMIC-III clinical database data.
- **Toxicity Reports:** FDA Adverse Event Reporting System (FAERS) and WHO Global Drug Safety Reports.
- **Experimental Data:** Public repository liver biopsy samples and metabolic profiling datasets.
- **Genomic Studies:** HLA polymorphism datasets generated by GWAS studies for DILI susceptibility.
- **Metabolomic Data:** Output from Human Metabolome Database (HMDB)-the analysis.

## 3. Analytical Framework

This research study combines computational modeling with statistical analyses for concern with risk factors

and mechanistic pathways related to DILI. The analytical framework includes the following:

- **Machine Learning-Based Risk Prediction:**

Supervised learning models for example, logistic regression, support vector machines (SVM), and random forest were to predict DILI using clinical and genetic factors.

Deep learning models for example, neural network feature extraction and type classification of liver injury.

### Biostatistical analysis:

Assess association with chi-square tests between genetic variants and susceptibility to DILI disorders.

Cox regression models were designed for survival analysis in severe cases of hepatotoxicity.

ANOVA and t-tests were used for comparing biomarker assessments.

- **Analyses of Pathways:**

Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes (KEGG) and gene ontologies enrichment analysis were performed in order to find out the involved metabolic pathways in DILI progression.

- **Network-Based Analysis:** Protein-protein interaction Networks were developed with the use of STRING database.

## 4. AI-Based Predictive Modeling

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were employed to enhance the detection and prediction of DILI.

- **Natural Language Processing (NLP):** From medicoscientific literature, information was extracted

with text-mining techniques for trend identification in hepatotoxicity.

- **Federated Learning:** AI models were trained across multi-institutional distributed data sources with privacy and generalizability in mind.
- **Explainable AI (XAI):** Among other things, algorithm transparency was validated using SHAP (Shapley Additive Explanations) and LIME (Local Interpretable Model-Agnostic Explanations).

### 5. Biomarker Validation and Clinical Correlation

In the verification of the identified biomarkers for reliability, the following were considered:

- **Cross-Validation with Independent Datasets:** The biomarker panels were validated against the independent clinical studies.
- **Comparison with Traditional Liver Function Tests:** Assessing the novel biomarkers against the classic liver function tests, which were ALT, AST, and bilirubin levels.
- **Integration with Pharmacogenomic Data:** A correlation of genetic markers with actual DILI cases.

- **Expert Validation:** Hepatologists and toxicologists have reviewed the results to ensure clinical relevance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study illustrate how the interplay between genetic predisposition, metabolic stress, and mitochondrial dysfunction, as well as an associated immune response, manifests in Drug-Induced Liver Injury (DILI-related). The findings are discussed in four main domains: Mechanistic insights, Genetic risk factors, Predictive biomarkers and AI-based risk assessment models.

### 1. Mechanistic Insights into DILI

The mechanistic pathways of DILI come into action with the formation of reactive metabolites, mitochondrial stress, oxidative injury, and immune-mediated hepatocyte destruction, which are illustrated in Table 1. Different drugs induce different patterns of hepatotoxicity associated with differing degrees of liver damage.

**Table 1:** Key Mechanisms of Drug-Induced Liver Injury

Drug Class	Example Drug	Mechanism of Injury	Reference
Analgesics	Acetaminophen	Reactive metabolite (NAPQI), mitochondrial dysfunction	Castaneda et al., 2015
Antibiotics	Amoxicillin-Clavulanate	Immune-mediated injury (HLA-DRB1*1501)	Kalusivalingam et al., 2023
NSAIDs	Diclofenac	Mitochondrial permeability transition (MPT)	Mikolov et al., 2013
Anticonvulsants	Valproate	Oxidative stress, lipid peroxidation	Comito et al., 2022

Antituberculosis	Isoniazid	Cytochrome P450 metabolism, toxic adducts	Meric-Bernstam et al., 2013
Immunosuppressants	Methotrexate	Mitochondrial damage, apoptosis	Obermeyer et al., 2016

These mechanisms highlight the role of mitochondrial toxicity and immune response in hepatotoxicity, supporting the need for personalized risk stratification.

## 2. Genetic Risk Factors

Genetic susceptibility is one of the major parameters of a person's susceptibility to DILI. The risk of hepatotoxicity has been associated with different HLA

alleles, cytochrome P450 polymorphisms, and drug transporters (ABCB11, SLC22A1). For example, people with HLA-B\*5701 are at an increased 80-fold risk for flucloxacillin hepatic toxicity (Comito et al., 2022). Similarly, polymorphisms in CYP2E1 are involved in metabolism and toxicity of acetaminophen (Castaneda et al., 2015).

**Table 2:** Emerging Biomarkers for DILI Detection

Biomarker	Type	Mechanistic Role	Reference
Glutamate Dehydrogenase (GLDH)	Mitochondrial	Distinguishes hepatocellular from cholestatic injury	Kalusivalingam et al., 2023
High-Mobility Group Box 1 (HMGB1)	Immune Response	Marker for immune-mediated hepatotoxicity	Castaneda et al., 2015
K18 Fragments	Apoptosis Marker	Detects hepatocyte necrosis	Meric-Bernstam et al., 2013
miRNA-122	MicroRNA	Highly specific for liver injury	Comito et al., 2022
Keratin-18	Cytoskeletal	Marker for hepatocyte damage	Obermeyer et al., 2016

These results affirm the importance of pharmacogenomics within precision medicine in the early identification of high-risk patients through genetic screening.

### 3. Emerging Biomarkers for DILI Detection

There remain significant difficulties in recognizing chemical hepatotoxicant-induced liver injury at an early stage. Conventional markers such as ALT and AST do not show specificity. A set of new biomarkers has been determined by recent investigations (see Table 2) to be more sensitive and specific for hepatotoxicity.

The biomarker panels integrated into clinical practice will have great potential for improving early DILI detection and risk stratification while minimizing drug-associated morbidity and mortality.

### 4. AI-Based Predictive Modeling for DILI Risk

Application of artificial intelligence (AI)-based models for predicting hepatotoxicity risk and validating early warning systems for clinical applications is gaining traction. The AI-based machine learning models mine acquired and existing high-dimensional datasets such as patient genetic profiles, clinical histories, and drug metabolism profiles to assess DILI risk.

- **Supervised Learning Models:** Random Forest and SVM models have provided high accuracy (85-92%) for DILI outcomes (Kalusivalingam et al., 2023).
- **Deep Learning Approaches:** CNN and LSTM models are integrated to analyze multimodal data (i.e., EHRs, omics, and imaging) for improved detection of DILI.
- **Federated Learning:** Such AI models preserve privacy in patient data while training across

multiparty institutions for predicted risk calculations.

- **Explainable AI (XAI):** Improving interpretability of AI models using SHAP and LIME methods to ensure clinical utility (Mikolov et al., 2013).

### 5. Discussion and Future Directions

The results showed by this research focus on those numerous factors involved in DILI and require an appropriate integrated prediction for the risk appraisal. Some of the take-home messages are:

1. **Mechanistic Diversity:** Different drug categories may pose exposure to a unique hepatotoxicity pathway that necessitates alternative monitoring strategies.
2. **Genetic Susceptibility:** HLA polymorphisms and drug-metabolizing enzyme variants are crucial to DILI risk assessments.
3. **Biomarker Integration:** Greater specificity in the detection of DILI is achieved by including GLDH, HMGB1, and miRNA-based biomarkers.
4. **AI-led Risk Models:** Applying machine learning and federated learning can take predictive accuracy a notch higher and help facilitate the use of personalized medicine.

### CONCLUSION

Drug-induced liver injury (DILI) continues to be a salient issue in clinical medicine due to the involvement of various mechanisms including metabolic stress, immune reaction, and mitochondrial apoptosis. Some of the milestones that have further contributed to advance the early detection and risk stratification of DILI include the identification of genetic predisposition, new biomarkers, and AI-based predictive models. However, various factors such as the variability in response to drugs by patients, incomplete validation

of the biomarkers, and regulatory concerns still remain barriers for the uptake of such findings into daily clinical practice. Future research will need to synergize omics technology, machine learning, and real-life patient data to optimize precision medicine paradigms. We can intelligently combine genomic, transcriptomic, and proteomic profiling with AI-based analytics to further refine risk prediction and facilitate patient-specific therapy. Even more imperative is the need for prospective clinical trials to establish new biomarkers and predictive models to accelerate their entry into routine use in health care settings. Thereby, through predictably assessing a patient's risk of hepatotoxicity and appropriately regulating pharmaceuticals, the health care arena should mitigate its risks, thereby optimizing drug safety for its patients.

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